

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT FOR AEFM CONSULAR ADJUDICATOR POSITIONS

The Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) announces a new program to provide Appointment Eligible Family members (AEFMs) with certification enabling them to apply for Consular Adjudicator positions overseas in coordination with the assignment of their direct-hire employee sponsor. Consular Adjudicators are assigned to entry-level consular positions, primarily in nonimmigrant visa units, that are unfilled due to insufficient numbers of entry-level Foreign Service Officers. The regular Foreign Service assignments process invariably leaves some overseas positions without sufficient qualified Foreign Service bidders. Previously, some of these positions had been opened to AEFMs under the Hard-to-fill Program. Under this new program, the Bureau of Consular Affairs Executive Office (CA/EX) will proactively accept applications from AEFMs interested in serving as Consular Adjudicators in entry-level positions and work with the Bureau of Human Resources Office of Career Development and Assignments (HR/CDA) so that “handshakes” for assignments overseas can be offered to the direct hire spouse and the AEFM in a timely and coordinated manner.

POSITION TITLE:

Appointment Eligible Family Member Consular Adjudicator (AEFM/CA)

JOB DESCRIPTION:

AEFMs may be assigned to full-time, permanent entry level consular positions abroad, primarily in nonimmigrant visa units, as Consular Adjudicators. AEFM/CAs will be hired under a Family Member Appointment (FMA). This is a Limited Non-Career Appointment. The potential to extend such appointments is based on satisfactory performance and the needs of the Foreign Service.

SERIES AND GRADE:

FP-06, FP-05, and FP-04. AEFM/CAs may be appointed at the FP-04 level, if they have served at least one year previously at the FP-04 level, or served at least 18 months previously at the FP-05 level in either the AEFM/CA or PAS program.

BENEFITS:

AEFM/CAs hired under an FMA are eligible for many benefits, including non-competitive eligibility for qualifying service abroad (based on Executive Order 12721), to the extent authorized by 5 CFR § 315.608; Annual and Sick Leave; Thrift Savings Plan; Danger Pay (if applicable); language pay, if appropriate. They may also be in pay status during periods of required training.

NUMBER OF VACANCIES:

(Approximately) 50

AREA OF CONSIDERATION:

AEFMs who are U.S. citizens and are at least 21 years of age. For purposes of this program, an AEFM is defined as a U.S. citizen spouse, or U.S. citizen domestic partner (as defined in 3 FAM 1610) who, in either case, is on the travel orders or approved Form OF-126, Foreign Service Residence and Dependency Report, of a Foreign Service or Civil Service employee or uniformed service member permanently assigned to or stationed at a U.S. Foreign Service post or establishment abroad, or at an office of the American Institute in Taiwan abroad, under Chief of Mission authority and who does not receive a U.S. government retirement annuity or pension, based on a career in the U.S. Foreign Service, Civil Service, or uniformed service. An AEFM is eligible for assignment only to qualifying, local-hire positions at the sponsoring employee's or uniformed service member's post or office of assignment abroad, approved safe haven abroad, or alternate safe haven abroad.

LOCATION:

AEFM CA assignments can be in any geographic region abroad. A qualified AEFM/CA candidate should contact CA/EX to discuss potential assignments when the candidate's career spouse begins a bidding cycle. CA/EX and HR/CDA coordinate all assignments of AEFM/CAs to overseas posts, based on their direct hire spouses' assignments and their clearance to work in the country of assignment. CA/EX will notify AEFM/CAs of a specific assignment, i.e., the "handshake."

TOUR OF DUTY:

HR/CDA will assign the AEFM/CAs to two-year tours in entry-level, consular positions. Extensions will be reviewed on a case-by case basis, assuming the sponsor is extended initially.

DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES:

As noted above, all consular positions for the AEFM/CA program are full-time, permanent consular positions. The range of duties and responsibilities reflect those required of entry-level Foreign Service Officers.

Basic duties may include the following:

- A. Obtaining information relevant to provision of consular services by interviewing individuals, reviewing on-line applicants' visa or passport application history, reviewing name searches for visa and passport applicants, and verifying information provided by applicants, as necessary.
- B. Processing visas or passports, including reviewing and reconciling visa, passport issuance, report of birth, and other controlled records and supplies, determining and verifying required clearances prior to issuing visas or passports; and preparing visa revocations, security advisory opinions, and advisory opinions.
- C. Making and reviewing decisions about visa or passport applications including adjudicating visa or passport applications by reviewing cases and applying relevant USG law, regulations, precedent, and relevant agreements, and cooperating with other agencies in applying laws and regulations related to visa applications.
- D. Interacting with those applying for consular services, including explaining entry procedures to persons, dealing fairly but compassionately with all clients, including applicants refused visas, and communicating appropriately with visa applicants, their attorneys or congressional staff.
- E. Investigating potentially fraudulent activities or claims, coordinating and cooperating with other agencies to prevent entry of ineligible aliens into the United States, developing working relationships with appropriate in-country officials for the purpose of sharing and verifying information, providing documentation of consular decisions.
- F. Using computers and Microsoft Office applications such as Word, Excel, Outlook, and Power Point, and using specialized consular computer systems.
- G. Preparing written materials, such as memos and status reports, as requested.
- H. Communicating with and assisting Department of State colleagues, e.g., assisting colleagues on projects, serving rotationally as duty officer 24/7, attending meetings, and providing information on Consular activities and services, as appropriate.

I. Managing Sensitive and/or Classified Information.

Other responsibilities may include:

- Conducting outreach, pro-actively representing the United States and promoting U.S. policies abroad
- Participating on boards, committees, and task forces
- Interacting with foreign government officials
- Communicating with non-government organizations/groups
- Monitoring and reporting on developments of interest to the U.S. Government
- Evaluating policies and procedures
- Providing day-to-day oversight of Locally Employed Staff (LE Staff) and/or Eligible Family Members (EFMs)

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:

A U.S. Consular Adjudicator who issues a visa for admission to the United States is required by law to personally certify in writing that he or she has performed the necessary visa lookout check, a process that includes (but is not limited to) reviewing returns from Facial Recognition checks and from Automated Biometric Identification and Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System fingerprint clearances; checking the Consular Lookout and Support System and other appropriate post records; and reviewing nonimmigrant visa and immigrant visa case notes and any other post files for information that would render an applicant ineligible for a visa.

This program is distinctly different from other opportunities for AEFMs to work in consular sections, because the Consular Adjudicator program is centrally managed by CA and HR. This means that the application process, assessment of interested candidates, and assignment of qualified candidates will be handled by Washington, not posts abroad. For this program only, an AEFM/CA may be appointed under an FMA prior to arrival at post and may be in pay status during consular training and language training, if required, prior to arrival overseas.

The assessment process for AEFMs who wish to be Consular Adjudicators is the same as the assessment process for other Consular Adjudicators on limited, non-career appointments. This process is administered by the Bureau of Human Resources Board of Examiners (HR/REE/BEX). The list of AEFMs who successfully pass the assessment process will be maintained by CA/EX. An AEFM who successfully passes the assessment process will not need to do so again during the duration of the direct hire spouse's employment with the U.S. government. Following the bidding and assignment process of the U.S. direct hire, when an AEFM expresses interest on a subsequent position overseas, the AEFM may have to renew security or medical clearances, and/or address the language designation of the position. Should the AEFM/CA go five years without an adjudicatory assignment, s/he will be required to re-take the PC 530 Basic Consular Course.

At the time that an AEFM requests placement for a Consular Adjudicator position, that individual will have to provide CA/EX a signed copy of the "Conditions of Employment."

These conditions are:

- The initial appointment is for a period to complete required training and a two- year assignment to an entry-level consular position abroad.
- Subsequent appointment extensions are subject to satisfactory performance and the needs of the Service.
- AEFM/CAs must pass the basic consular course or the appointment will be terminated.
- AEFM/CAs must pass language training, if required, at the appropriate level of the language-designated job to which assigned, or the appointment may be terminated. There is no conversion mechanism to a career Foreign Service or Civil Service appointment.
- AEFM/CAs earn non-competitive hiring eligibility for federal government service for time served overseas in qualifying local-hire positions, to the extent authorized by 5 CFR § 315.608.
- An AEFM/CA's FMA may be terminated at any time by the Department of State.
- An AEFM/CA may terminate his/her FMA at any time, but is expected to serve a minimum of one year. Failure to serve the minimum required period will be presumed by CA to undermine eligibility for any future assignment as a Consular Adjudicator.
- An AEFM/CA must serve at least one year as a Consular Adjudicator prior to being eligible to apply for another position at the same post of employment.
- An AEFM/CA must maintain a Top Secret clearance and any applicable country-specific clearance.
- An AEFM/CA must maintain a medical clearance for the country of assignment.
- All AEFM/CA's will support U.S. government policy in public regardless of personal views.

INITIAL GRADE/ INCREASE IN GRADE:

The majority of AEFM/CAs will initially be hired at the FS-06 or FS-05 level based on education. Some AEFMs may be appointed at the FS-04 grade if they have previously served at least one-year as a consular adjudicator at the FS-04 grade or served at least 18 months as a consular adjudicator at the FP-05 grade. Those in the AEFM/CA program will have the possibility of a grade increase to the FS-04 level. Grade Increase Potential: based on the Foreign Service entry level promotion scale:

- FP-06 to FP-05 after 12 months of service in pay status with satisfactory performance as an FP-06 AEFM/CA.
- FP-05 to FP-04 after 18 months of service in pay status with satisfactory performance as an FP-05 AEFM/CA.

The grade increase is applicable only while serving in an AEFM/CA position. AEFM/CAs will be evaluated annually using the DS-1829 performance evaluation form.

ORIENTATION/TRAINING/ASSIGNMENT:

As noted above, AEFM/CAs are eligible to be in pay status during required training, prior to arrival at post. The Department expects an AEFM/CA to schedule training for the time period when the direct hire spouse is also in Washington pursuant to travel orders. CA funds required consular training and, in consultation with HR/CDA, may fund recommended orientation or other training at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) that may be scheduled based on the direct hire spouse's travel orders.

QUALIFICATIONS AND SPECIALIZED EXPERIENCE:

All AEFM/CA candidates must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Be a U.S. citizen and AEFM of at least 21 years of age who is on the travel orders of a direct hire employee assigned to an overseas post;
- Possess a Bachelor level college degree from an accredited or internationally recognized university;
- Demonstrate a strong command of the English language, including grammar, spelling and punctuation;
- Pass the rigorous testing standard for AEFM/CAs as administered by HR/REE/BEX;
- Obtain and hold a Top-Secret level security clearance;
- Obtain a medical clearance; and
- Pass a Foreign Service suitability review.

Education completed in foreign colleges or universities may be used to meet federal job requirements for this position if the applicant can show that the foreign education is comparable to education received in the United States. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide such evidence when applying for federal jobs. For Professional Adjudication Specialists (PAS) only: Those individuals who are now serving as a PAS and who do not have a Bachelor level college degree from an accredited or internationally recognized university may use their adjudicatory experience as a PAS as comparable experience in lieu of an the education requirement.

KNOWLEDGES, SKILLS, ABILITIES, AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS:

The education, work experience, and other qualifications evaluated for evidence of the following knowledge, skills, abilities, and other requirements have been identified as important to successful job performance as a Consular Adjudicator, based on extensive job analysis research. Not all of these attributes need to be met by a candidate; the attributes will be used as a set to evaluate candidates.

- A. General knowledge of the United States, including customs and culture, society, trends, history, economy, government, political system, and constitution;
- B. Skill in written and oral communication, including English grammar and usage, techniques for effective interpersonal communication, techniques for handling interviews, complaints, sources of information, and public speaking ability;

- C. General skills in computers, including computer operations, common office software programs (e.g., Microsoft), e-mail systems, and Internet. Successful applicants will receive training in specialized Consular software applications;
- D. General subject matter, including psychology and human behavior, interacting with individuals undergoing stress, and basic mathematics.

SKILLS REQUIRED:

- A. Active listening
- B. Judgment and decision making
- C. Critical thinking
- D. Social perceptiveness and interpersonal ability
- E. Service orientation
- F. Good time management
- G. Strong reading comprehension
- H. Active learning
- I. Persuasion
- J. Solving complex problems
- K. Learning strategies
- L. Superior Oral and Written Communication Skills: In order to pass the assessment process, successful applicants must consistently meet a high standard for English, both written (overall structure as well as grammar, spelling, and punctuation) and spoken (overall structure as well as delivery, clarity, and succinctness). Those who fall short of this standard will not be competitive.

HOW WILL YOU BE EVALUATED:

AEFMs are required to pass the Board of Examiners (BEX) assessment process to qualify for certification as a Consular Adjudicator. CA/EX will accept applications and check for the minimum qualifications (age, U.S. citizenship, and a college degree). CA/EX will forward qualified applicants to BEX to begin the testing process.

The first step of the BEX assessment process is an online test. This test has four components: General Knowledge, English Language Expression, Situational Judgment, and Understanding Regulations. AEFMs will have the option of completing the online portion of the test in a proctored and controlled setting overseas or completing it in the BEX office in Washington, D.C. Those applicants who pass the online portion must subsequently appear in person in Washington, D.C. to complete the assessment process, i.e., the written case management exercise and the structured interview with a panel that includes a consular expert. Applicants who do not pass the online portion of the test will be required to wait one

year before they are eligible to re-test. The Department of State will not provide transportation or per diem funding for applicants to fulfill assessment requirements.

Applicants who pass the in-person assessment will then be subject to a security clearance investigation, medical clearance examination, and suitability review. Applicants who do not pass the in person assessment portion may reapply one year after their last on-line test.

Once BEX determines that a candidate is fully qualified, BEX will then so notify CA/EX. The AEFM/CA certification of qualifications does not expire; CA/EX will indefinitely keep the name of the qualified AEFM/CA candidate on its list of such candidates. However, as noted above, AEFM/CAs may need to be retrained on consular matters or update security and medical clearances in order to accept a specific assignment overseas.

HOW TO APPLY:

Applications must be submitted electronically to AEFM-CA@state.gov. Each candidate should provide the following information in an email:

- Fill out and attach a DS-1950 form (fillable form is available online at www.state.gov/documents/organization/79991.pdf)

Also include:

- Evidence of U.S. citizenship (for example, provide U.S. passport number and date of issuance)
- Full name of direct hire spouse
- Agency of direct hire spouse
- Current assignment of direct hire spouse
- Evidence of required educational experience:

All applicants must attach to the e-mail application a copy of their college transcripts and evidence that a four year bachelor's degree was awarded. Unofficial college transcripts will be accepted. Those applicants who attended a foreign university must submit all necessary documents to a private U.S. organization that specializes in interpretation of foreign educational credentials, commonly called a credential evaluation service. To be acceptable, the foreign credential evaluation must include/describe: a) the type of education received by the applicant, b) the level of education completed in relation to the U.S. education system and state that its comparability recommendations follow the general guidelines of the U.S. National Council for the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials, c) the content of the applicant's educational program earned abroad and the standard obtained, and d) the status of the awarding foreign school's recognition and legitimacy in its home country's education system.

Each applicant will receive a confirmation email from CA/EX when the application has been received and is being processed. Each applicant will receive another communication once CA/EX has completed evaluation of minimum qualifications. **Please do not contact HR/REE/BEX until further instructions have been received.**

Once CA/EX has determined that an applicant has met all the minimal qualifications, CA/EX will pass the application to HR/REE/BEX. BEX will provide the applicant instructions as to how to initiate the assessment process. Applicants should not provide information to CA/EX not specifically requested. Please also note that Executive Branch agencies are barred by 5 U.S. Code 3303, as amended, from accepting or considering prohibited political recommendations and are required to return any prohibited political recommendations to sender. In addition, as mandated by 5 U.S. Code 3110, relatives of federal employees may not be granted preference in competing for these employment opportunities and nepotism is prohibited.

The Department of State is committed to equal opportunity and fair and equitable treatment for all without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, sexual orientation, disabling condition, political affiliation, marital status, or prior statutory, constitutionally protected activity. The Department of State provides reasonable accommodation to applicants with disabilities. Applicants requiring reasonable accommodations for any part of the application or hiring process should so advise the Department. Decisions for granting reasonable accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis.

Obtaining certification as a qualified AEFM/CA candidate does not guarantee employment. An AEFM/CA position does not automatically lead to further employment in the State Department.

All questions regarding the application process, eligibility requirements or other issues should be sent to AEFM-CA-Questions@state.gov. Questions sent to the AEFM-CA@state.gov application intake email inbox will not be answered.

FOR PROFESSIONAL ADJUDICATION SPECIALISTS:

It is CA's intention to end the PAS Program in favor of the AEFM/CA Program. As an interim measure, those AEFMs who are now serving as PAS will be permitted by CA to complete their current assignments in their PAS status. Any PAS who wishes to work again in a consular section in an adjudicatory capacity must submit an application to the AEFM/CA Program. As noted above, a current or former PAS who has not completed a four year bachelor's degree or foreign equivalent may use their professional consular adjudicatory experience as comparable experience to satisfy the education requirement. One year of current or former service as a PAS satisfies the education requirement in lieu of a bachelor's degree.

CA/EX will also suspend the acceptance of new applications to the PAS Program during the pilot phase of the AEFM/CA program. Those AEFMs who wish to have the professional status and adjudicatory responsibilities of an entry-level Foreign Service Officer should apply to the AEFM/CA Program.

The AEFM/CA Program does not impact other employment opportunities in consular sections abroad for AEFMs. Job vacancies for non-adjudicatory positions will continue to be advertised and filled by post human resources specialists.